Complaints Policy

Policy Statement

Eden Springs Girls Secondary is committed to providing a high-quality education and care for all pupils. We value feedback and take all concerns and complaints seriously. This policy sets out how we will handle complaints in a fair, open, and responsive way.
We aim to resolve complaints informally wherever possible, but we have formal procedures in place for complaints that cannot be resolved informally.
This policy is in line with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints made by parents, carers, pupils, and members of the public about the school's provision or the actions of staff.
This policy does not cover:

- Complaints about services provided by third parties (these should be directed to the provider)
- Anonymous complaints (though these may be considered at the school's discretion)
- Complaints that have already been fully investigated under this policy
- Vexatious or repeated complaints

Separate Procedures Apply For

- Safeguarding concerns (follow the Safeguarding Policy and contact the DSL)
- Staff grievances or disciplinary matters (follow internal HR procedures)
- Admissions decisions (follow the Admissions Appeals procedure)
- Exclusion decisions (follow the Exclusions procedure)
- Whistleblowing concerns (follow the Whistleblowing Policy)
- Subject Access Requests under GDPR (follow the Data Protection Policy)

If you are unsure whether your concern should be dealt with under this policy, please contact the school office.

Principles

Our complaints procedure is based on the following principles:

- Complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with fairly and impartially
- Complaints will be dealt with promptly and within specified timescales
- Complainants will be treated with respect and courtesy
- Complaints will be handled confidentially, with information shared only with those who need to know
- Complainants will be kept informed of progress
- Complaints will be investigated thoroughly
- Complainants will receive a full response addressing all issues raised
- We will learn from complaints and use them to improve our services

- Complainants have the right to escalate their complaint if they are not satisfied with the outcome

Who Can Make a Complaint?
Complaints may be made by:

- Parents or carers of pupils at the school
- Pupils (with support if needed)
- Members of the public

Complaints may be made on behalf of others with their consent.

Time Limits
Complaints should be raised as soon as possible after the incident or issue occurs. The school will consider complaints made within three months of the incident. Complaints made after this time may not be investigated unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Resolution
Most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally by speaking to the appropriate member of staff.

Who to Contact

- **Concerns about a pupil's learning or wellbeing:** Speak to the class teacher
- **Concerns about a class teacher:** Speak to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
- **Concerns about school policies or procedures:** Speak to the Headteacher
- **Concerns about the Headteacher:** Speak to a Proprietor
- **General concerns:** Contact the school office who will direct you to the appropriate person

How to Raise a Concern
You can raise a concern:

- In person (by appointment or at drop-off/pick-up time)
- By phone
- By email
- By letter

What Will Happen

- The staff member will listen to your concern
- They will try to resolve the issue immediately or will arrange to investigate and get back to you
- You should receive a response within 5 school days
- If the issue is resolved, no further action is needed
- If the issue is not resolved, you can escalate to Stage 2

Most concerns are resolved at this stage.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint to the Headteacher
If your concern has not been resolved informally, or if you feel it is serious enough to require formal investigation, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher.

How to Make a Formal Complaint
Put your complaint in writing (by letter or email) to the Headteacher. Your complaint should include:

- Your name and contact details
- Your relationship to the school (e.g., parent of pupil in Year 3)
- Details of the complaint (what happened, when, where, who was involved)
- What you have already done to try to resolve the issue (if applicable)
- What outcome you are seeking
- Any relevant evidence or documentation

Send your complaint to: Rashta Bibi, Headteacher Eden Springs Girls Secondary, 36 Greaves Street, BD5 7PE/ admin@edenspringsgirls.co.uk

What Will Happen

1. **Acknowledgement:** The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint within 3 school days.
2. **Investigation:** The Headteacher will investigate your complaint. This may include:
    - Reviewing relevant documents and records
    - Speaking to staff members involved
    - Speaking to witnesses (if appropriate)
    - Speaking to you to clarify details (if needed)
3. **Response:** The Headteacher will provide a written response within 10 school days of receiving your complaint. The response will:
    - Summarise the complaint
    - Explain how the complaint was investigated
    - Set out the findings
    - Explain the decision and reasons
    - Set out any actions the school will take
    - Explain how to escalate to Stage 3 if you are not satisfied

If the investigation cannot be completed within 10 school days, the Headteacher will write to you to explain the delay and provide a revised timescale.

If Your Complaint Is About the Headteacher
If your complaint is about the Headteacher, it should be sent directly to the Proprietors at Stage 2. The complaint will be investigated by a Proprietor who is not involved in the day-to-day running of the school.

Stage 3: Complaint Panel Hearing
If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, you can request that your complaint is heard by a Complaint Panel.

How to Request a Panel Hearing
Write to the Proprietors within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 2 response. Your letter should:

- State that you wish to escalate your complaint to Stage 3
- Explain why you are not satisfied with the Stage 2 response
- State what outcome you are seeking

Send your request to: The Proprietors Eden Springs Girls Secondary, 36 Greaves Street, BD5 7PE/ admin@edenspringsgirls.co.uk

What Will Happen

1. **Acknowledgement:** The Proprietors will acknowledge your request within 3 school days
2. **Panel Convened:** A Complaint Panel will be convened within 15 school days of receiving your request. The panel will consist of:
    - At least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint
    - At least one member who is independent of the management and running of the school
3. **Panel Hearing:** You will be invited to attend the panel hearing to present your complaint. You may:
    - Bring a companion or representative (but not a legal representative acting in a legal capacity)
    - Submit written evidence in advance
    - Call witnesses (with prior agreement)
4. **The School's Response:** The Headteacher (or Proprietor if the complaint is about the Headteacher) will attend to present the school's response
5. **Panel Decision:** The panel will consider all the evidence and reach a decision. The panel may:
    - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
    - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
    - Recommend actions the school should take
6. **Written Outcome:** The panel will provide a written outcome within 5 school days of the hearing. The outcome will be sent to:
    - The complainant
    - The Headteacher
    - The Proprietors

- Any person complained about (where relevant)

The decision of the panel is final. There is no further right of appeal within the school's complaints procedure.

Complaints About Safeguarding
If your complaint relates to a safeguarding concern, you should follow the school's Safeguarding Policy and contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.
Safeguarding concerns will not be dealt with through the complaints procedure. They will be dealt with in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures and may be referred to external agencies such as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), children's social care, or the police.
If you have concerns about how the school has handled a safeguarding matter, you can contact:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01274 435600
- Ofsted: 0300 123 1231
- Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership: [contact details]

Vexatious or Repeated Complaints
The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. However, we will not tolerate behaviour that is:

- Abusive, offensive, or threatening towards staff
- Vexatious (made to cause annoyance or harassment)
- Repeated without new evidence or information

If a complaint is considered vexatious or repeated, the Headteacher or Proprietors may:

- Refuse to investigate the complaint
- Limit contact with the complainant
- Take legal action if behaviour is threatening or abusive

The school will write to the complainant to explain why their complaint is not being investigated and what action is being taken.

Complaints About the Proprietors
If your complaint is about the Proprietors, you should contact:

- Ofsted: 0300 123 1231 / enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- The Department for Education: 0370 000 2288

Recording and Monitoring
All formal complaints (Stage 2 and Stage 3) will be recorded in a central complaints log. The log will include:

- Date complaint received
- Name of complainant (kept confidential)
- Summary of complaint
- Stage reached
- Outcome
- Actions taken

The complaints log will be reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and Proprietors to identify:

- Patterns or trends
- Areas for improvement
- Training needs
- Policy or procedure changes needed

Anonymous complaints will be recorded but may not be investigated unless they raise serious safeguarding concerns.

Learning from Complaints

The school is committed to learning from complaints and using them to improve our services. After a complaint has been resolved, we will:

- Review what happened and why
- Identify what could be done differently
- Implement changes to policies, procedures, or practices where appropriate
- Provide feedback or training to staff if needed
- Monitor the effectiveness of changes made

The Headteacher will provide an annual report to the Proprietors on complaints, including:

- Number of complaints received
- Types of complaints
- Outcomes
- Actions taken
- Lessons learned
-

Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled confidentially. Information will only be shared with:

- Those who need to know in order to investigate and resolve the complaint
- External agencies where required (e.g., Ofsted, LADO)

Records of complaints will be kept securely in accordance with data protection legislation. Complainants should also respect confidentiality and not share details of the complaint or investigation publicly, including on social media.

Unreasonable Behaviour

The school expects all complainants to behave reasonably and treat staff with courtesy and respect. We will not tolerate:

- Aggressive, abusive, or threatening behaviour (in person, by phone, in writing, or online)
- Unreasonable demands or expectations
- Unreasonable persistence or volume of contact
- Vexatious complaints

If a complainant behaves unreasonably, the school may:

- Ask them to leave the premises
- Terminate a phone call or meeting
- Refuse to respond to further communications
- Limit contact to written communication only
- Report threatening behaviour to the police
- Take legal action

The school will write to the complainant to explain what behaviour is unacceptable and what action is being taken.

Time Limits and Extensions
The school aims to resolve complaints within the timescales set out in this policy. However, if a complaint is particularly complex or if key people are unavailable (e.g., due to illness or school holidays), it may take longer.
If this is the case, the school will write to the complainant to:

- Explain the reason for the delay
- Provide a revised timescale
- Keep the complainant updated on progress

Support for Complainants
If you need support to make a complaint, the school can:

- Provide this policy in different formats (e.g., large print, translated)
- Arrange an interpreter if English is not your first language
- Arrange for you to meet with a member of staff to help you put your complaint in writing
- Make reasonable adjustments for complainants with disabilities

Please contact the school office if you need any support.

Complaints from Pupils
Pupils can make complaints using this procedure. Younger pupils may need support from a parent, carer, or trusted adult.
The school also has other ways for pupils to raise concerns, including:

- Speaking to their class teacher
- Speaking to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
- Using the school's worry box or suggestion box
- Speaking to a trusted adult in school

Pupils will be supported to make complaints and will be treated with respect throughout the process.

Serial or Persistent Complainants
In a small number of cases, a complainant may persist in making complaints that have already been fully investigated or may make repeated complaints about the same issue.
If the school considers a complainant to be serial or persistent, the Headteacher or Proprietors may:

- Inform the complainant in writing that the matter is closed

- Refuse to investigate further complaints on the same issue unless new evidence is provided
- Limit contact to written communication only
- Designate a single point of contact for the complainant

This decision will be reviewed annually.

Complaints to External Bodies
If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, you can complain to external bodies:
Ofsted: If your complaint is about the school's compliance with regulations or the quality of education provided.

- Phone: 0300 123 1231
- Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Online: www.gov.uk/complain-ofsted-report

Department for Education: If your complaint is about the school's compliance with independent school standards.

- Phone: 0370 000 2288
- Online: www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): If your complaint is about how the school has handled your personal data.

- Phone: 0303 123 1113
- Online: www.ico.org.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): If your complaint is about safeguarding.

- Phone: 01274 435600

Complainants should normally complete the school's complaints procedure before contacting external bodies.

Monitoring and Review
This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Proprietors.
The Proprietors will receive an annual report on complaints, including:

- Number and types of complaints
- Outcomes
- Lessons learned
- Changes made as a result of complaints

Appendix: Complaint Form

Formal Complaint Form
Please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher (or Proprietors if your complaint is about the Headteacher).

Your Details:
Name: _____
Relationship to school: _____
Address: _____

Postcode: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Pupil Details (if applicable):
Name: _____
Class: _____

Your Complaint:
Please provide details of your complaint, including:

- What happened
- When it happened
- Where it happened
- Who was involved
- Any witnesses

What have you already done to try to resolve this issue?

What outcome are you seeking?

Please attach any relevant evidence or documentation

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For office use only:
Date received: _____
Acknowledged: _____ By: _____

Investigating officer: _____
Response due date: _____
Outcome: _____